Presbytery of Chicago
Bob Reynolds Retirement
September 15, 2015
Glen Ellyn, Illinois
John Buchanan

I have to confess that when I think of the Executive Presbyter of any Presbytery, but very particularly the Presbytery of Chicago, I find myself asking - who would want this job? From John Knox, down through the centuries, right up to the present, the historians remind us that Presbyterians have loved nothing better than a good fight. In his fine recent book, Bradley Longfield, Professor of Church History at Dubuque, documents it. We have pretty much been arguing with one another, with consistent vigor and passion, refusing to talk to one another, finally walking away from one another, for four

and a half centuries. We have an ingrained suspicion of and distaste for authority, particularly ecclesiastical authority, built into our DNA. In fact, after 52 years of arguing and fighting about this and that I conclude that it IS our DNA.

So, the question is, who would want to be an Presbytery Executive? You have very little constitutional authority, you never have enough money to do what you want to do, everyone who is unhappy with the Presbyterian Church USA for whatever reason, holds you personally responsible, someone is always behaving badly or quitting, sometimes both. Who would want to do this?

The answer, of course, is someone who deeply loves the church, the Reformed Tradition, Presbyterianism -with our particularities and our peculiar way of doing things - but also our strong, precious values of orderliness and freedom. Someone who loves the church enough to want to serve it, not only when it is faithful and brave but also when it is exasperating and not very attractive.

Someone with almost infinite patience in addition to a heart full of love for the church, but also nerves of steel and skin as thick as an elephant's hide.

Now none of that is on either the Position Description or the Person Description. But that is

what you need and that is what a committee I was honored to moderate found 16 years ago in the Rev. Robert Reynolds. There were, I recall, plenty of qualified candidates and out of them all, after many meetings, plenty of discussions, interviews and fervent prayer, we unanimously nominated Bob Reynolds to come to Chicago and be our Executive Presbyter.

He has served us faithfully and well these 16 years. In times of controversy and crisis - and there have been doozies - he has been steady, balanced, fair to a fault. Throughout a monumental challenge with moral, programmatic and fiscal implications, a challenge that at times seemed that it could be almost catastrophic, Bob

came to weekly meetings always thoroughly prepared, always quietly patient, but always with his eye on the health and well being of the part of the church that had called him to leadership, and was the one reliable constant, week in and week out, as we inched our way over a period of several years to resolution.

In the meantime he has been a friend and pastor to us as we have moved through personal transitions.

I must also mention, and express great gratitude to Bob's secret resource and weapon and partner, his wife , Vickie, always pleasant, supportive, and herself a deeply committed and faithful Presbyterian - who I was privileged to watch help

a congregation I was serving, broaden its vision of the mission to which God was calling it.

Bob and Vickie, your friendship has been a gift to me and, Bob, you have been a gift to Chicago Presbytery.

May God bless you both as you begin a new chapter in your ministries and your life together,